



selected other formats.

### **L is for LAYOUT**

The design elements of each panel and the way they appear on the page have a significant impact on the pacing of a story. Questions to consider include:

- How are the panels situated on the page? Are they easy to follow? How are they shaped? Does their shape affect the story?
- How do the panels break up the artwork? Do these breaks slow the story down, speed the story up, and complicate the story?
- Do the panels provide the necessary information, through foreshadowing and extra detail, for readers to follow jumps in the storyline?

### **M is for MANGA**

Manga is the term for Japanese comic. Nearly one-third of material published in Japan is manga in form including technical manuals, textbooks, and fiction. There are manga published for all age groups and segments of the population. Thus, there are manga for businessmen, for young female readers, mature female readers and the like. There are visual differences, other than the language, in reading the manga that often are difficult to interpret for people new to the format. Manga titles are becoming more and more popular with young readers in North America and are beginning to dominate comic book selections in some stores.

### **N is for NEW**

Titles that are now the rage are quite different from those published when most of us were growing up. This is a case of reader's advisory in reverse: there is a definite need to be very conversant with someone who is an avid comic book/graphic novel reader and who knows the perimeters of your collection policy. Finding this person, or group of people, may be as easy as being seen reading graphic novels in public!

The collection of comic books and graphic novels may seem to be a new fad but libraries have already many examples in their collections of picture books. Illustrators such as Quentin Blake, Maurice Sendak, Raymond Briggs and Edward Gorey employ the use of comic book elements in their work.

### **O is for OLD AND FAMILIAR**

Many of the superhero titles have been published continually since their inception in the 1940s and 50s so there are some familiar titles available. Do not be surprised by how these titles have been updated to make them relevant to today's readership, however. Archie Comics are another familiar staple that still have a wide readership.

### **P is for PERCEPTION**

One of the major obstacles facing the graphic novel is the attitude towards the format by many members of the general public as well as educators and librarians. This attitude of comics being easy to read, filled with sex and violence, and having no literary quality is slowly being addressed, partially by the fact that graphic novels are now being added to library collections.

### **Q is for QUALITY VS QUANTITY**

This question is directly related to price point and readership? How many copies of each title should you have in your collection? Do you collect all of the volumes in a series?

### **R is for READERSHIP**

The average comic book reader is a male between the ages of eighteen and thirty. The average manga reader is a middle school aged female. The average library borrower of graphic novels is anybody and everybody. Since the format is so inclusive, the readership follows suit.

### **S is for SELECTION POLICIES**

Graphic novels and/or comic books should be included in collection policies for all libraries. Selection policies should include criteria for evaluation and collection to provide protection against censorship challenges as well as perception challenges: "You are not wasting our tax money on that!"

### **T is for TEEN READERS (AND NOT ONLY AT RISK ONES!)**

"Graphic novels are terrific in that they have a good story, but they have pictures and images that teens can relate to and enjoy. So you get the combination of the words and images that help pick up on the power of images in teens' lives." (Dr. Maurice Freedman, then president of the American Library Association on the reason for the 2002 ALA campaign, "Get Graphic at your Library.")

The Internet, television, and video games all help make graphic novels a comfortable way to read for today's teenagers. They are, in fact, particularly appealing to young people who have reading difficulties or who do not think they like to read.

### **U is for UNIVERSALITY OF THEMES AND ISSUES**

Not only are the myriad of themes universal but so also is the science of semiotics – the reading of signs and icons. While the written language may not be easily transferable, the comic book grammar (elements) and conventions are often universal.

### **V is for VISUAL LITERACY**

Comic book artists play with every possible visual element. Consider, for example:

- Panels that consist entirely of sound effects
- Word balloons that partially cover other word balloons to indicate interruptions in conversation
- Impossible angles, non-standard use of colour, odd shapes for word balloons and letters, different font for different speakers in a conversation, and the use of collages, computer generated art and other illustrative styles.

### **W is for WRITING**

Text, aside from its visual aspect, is often the forgotten half of comics. Good comic writers are rarely afforded the same attention or significance that the artists receive. The complicated parade of people who can work on a comic include:

- Author/illustrator (the same person)
- Author (writes storyline and dialogue)
- Plotter (responsible for the basic storyline)
- Scripter (person who writes the narration and dialogue)
- Translator
- Illustrator (does all aspects of the visual material)
- Penciler (person who provides the basic art)
- Inker (person who went over the penciled art)
- Colorist (person who paints/colours the drawings)
- Letterer (person who adds the actual writing to the page)

(Cont'd on p. 64)

The artwork of Muriel Wood complements the text. There is a full page illustration in each of the ten chapters and also a smaller print below each chapter title. In a book about polar bears and their environment, what could be more appropriate than the black and white drawings to bring depth and contours to the snowy world?

The care and attention to detail of both creators makes is a very worthwhile book for children with any interest in the natural world.

**Thematic Links:** Polar Bears; The North

*Mavis Holder;*

(Cont'd from p. 31)

- Editors (of the series or of the individual storyline)

### **X is for X-MEN AND OTHER SUPER-HEROES**

Superheroes still constitutes one of the most popular genres in the comic book world. They also tend to dominate the comic book to film trend that is so prevalent today. Do not dismiss them arbitrarily as many titles are extremely relevant and well written.

### **Y & Z are for ZZZZZ AND OTHER SOUND EFFECTS**

Sound has been given visual support

with effects such as heavy punctuation, capitalization, variety in size and style of lettering and the shape and size of sound balloons. All of these affect the sound of the story as it is being read and heard by the reader.

*Gail de Vos, storyteller, finds that the comic book format is the closest print medium to oral storytelling. She teaches storytelling, Canadian children's Literature, Young Adult Literature and Comic Books and Graphic Novels in Schools and Public Libraries for the School of Library and Information Studies at the University of Alberta. Gail is the author of seven books on storytelling and folklore.*

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P. O. Box 9

Pouch Cove, NL

A0A 3L0

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